

FY 2011 GYSGT SELECTION BOARD COMPILED DEBRIEF

The Enlisted Career Counseling and Evaluation Unit (MMSB-50) provide a selection board questionnaire to every active duty enlisted promotion board, prior to the convening date of the board. This allows us to receive feedback from every board member to ensure we obtain as much detailed information as possible for the compiled debrief. We are then debriefed by all 21 board members at the adjournment of the board, in which time we go into more detail concerning various topics. This debrief is conducted in conjunction with MMPR and other MMSB personnel. The debrief gives our section an opportunity to distribute information concerning certain aspects of the board to enable Marines to be best prepared going into a future selection board. The information from these questionnaires are combined with details gathered in the board debrief. Afterwards, it is compiled into a selection board compilation debrief, such as this FY11 GySgt compiled debrief.

The compiled debrief results are posted to our official website and passed throughout the leadership of our Corps to ensure mass distribution to the Marines it will have an effect. The more details we collect from the questionnaires and final debrief offers Marines more information to act on.

The compiled debriefs provide a synopsis view of all of the board members answers to the specific questions posed. It is recommended Marines utilize the last several years compiled debriefs consecutively to recognize the last several years' board members emphasis on certain aspects over others. This will give the Marine a more thorough understanding of the topic discussed.

If you have any additional questions you feel should be included in future questionnaires or in our promotion board debriefs, we ask that you let us know. You can reference ~~from~~ the previous three Fiscal Year debriefs found on our section's webpage on the M&RA portal. Most of the questions stay the same; as they are pertinent across the board regardless of the rank of the board.

These promotion board compiled debriefs are also intended to be used in conjunction with our quarterly Enlisted Career Newsflash, newsletter. Having these two sources of information provided to the Marines alleviates the amount of Marines being uninformed regarding career related information. In which, there is no excuse.

We ask that Senior Enlisted Advisors of active duty, enlisted career Marines, throughout every command in the Marine Corps, help us push this information down throughout every level of leadership. As leaders we are responsible to take care of our Marines and ensure that they are setup for success within their careers, but it is ultimately their responsibility to seek the information necessary to set them up for success.

These debrief results were compiled and completed by GySgt Robert Bell. If there are any questions concerning this debrief, please contact him directly at: Robert.L.Bell@usmc.mil or MGySgt Randall Thompson (Head, Enlisted Career Counseling & Evaluation unit) at: Randall.Thompson@usmc.mil.

**Semper Fidelis,
Enlisted Career Counseling & Evaluation Unit**

FY-2011 GUNNERY SERGEANT SELECTION BOARD

1. How did the board feel about personal letters or letters of recommendation that Marines forwarded to the board?

ANSWER - Letters to the board had a mix effect depending on why the letter was sent. Letters were useful if they clarified a situation in the record. Letters of recommendation are seldom needed and hardly sway the board one way or another. The records and fitness reports tell the story. If a Marine wants to submit a letter of recommendation then it needs to be short and explain something that cannot be pulled from anywhere within their records. If the author of the letter was very high ranking and had extensive experience with the Marine, then it would usually have been beneficial. Also, if the letter was sent to explain adverse material and the Marine took responsibility, then it could be worthwhile. However, if the letter is not properly proof read and the person just wants to explain how good they think they are then it wastes the boards time and has somewhat of an adverse effect in the preparation of the brief.

A bunch of letters from other people is not a positive thing and just takes more time away from the Marines brief. More often than not, a lot of letters tended to regurgitate information already in the MRO's record. Letters that didn't tend to provide anything substantial detracted from the briefing time allotted (3 minutes). When asked how many letters were too many to be sent to the board, the majority of the members commented that more than 2 tended to be overboard.

2. What made a Marine stand out from their peers?

ANSWER - A good current photo in Service Charlie's is the first thing the board members see. Showing that you took the time to prepare for the picture to show the most professional and updated image of yourself really started to help stand someone away from their peers. Solid consistent performance in billets held inside and outside of the Primary MOS was key. This also helps show that the Marine has the potential to be successful at the next higher rank. Being in the upper third (Above Average) to the middle third (Average) in both the RS and RO profiles, showing you are above your peers especially IN GRADE, also showed that you were "blooming where planted". It also helped if Marines showed that they were taking the initiative to max out their qualifications. For instance: doing all possible non-resident and resident PME, MCMAP belt, rifle and pistol and PFT/CFT scores.

Combat tours and successful Special Duty Assignments helped show diversity in a Marines record. Strong fitness report comments (Section I & K) concerning the Marines performance and education above and beyond the minimum was also important. Being an instructor with senior or master instructor certifications was also beneficial. When you take the time to scrub your record prior to the board, identifying any discrepancies and taking action - those records were usually a pleasure to brief for a board member and show your desire to be most competitive for selection.

3. If a Marine had a DUI/DWI in grade, was it recoverable?

ANSWER - The Marine could recover. It's not always that you've made a mistake but another of what has the Marine done to bounce back to make himself or herself more competitive the next time around. If the Marine had the DUI/DWI in grade it was very difficult for them to compete with Marines with clean records. The average timeframe of recovery for such adversity, for most board members, on this board was 2-5 years, depending on what the Marine has done since the adversity and how much time and space had elapsed since the incident.

4. What did it take to overcome a DUI/DWI?

ANSWER - It takes learning from that incident and not repeating it. Having plenty of time and space since the incident, of at least 3-4 years, if not more, seemed to be the average and having a stellar record from that point on. Very high marks and above and beyond in all training and schools, also seemed to help. Being that stellar performer you were prior to the DUI/DWI, after the adversity occurred. The bottom line is what your record shows of you since the DUI/DWI and what you have done above and beyond to compensate.

5. If a Marine had an incident of domestic violence in record, was it recoverable?

ANSWER - For the most part it was recoverable; however, it depended on the level in which the case was substantiated and what rehabilitative actions were taken to resolve the relationship. It also depended on how long ago the incident occurred and what the extenuating circumstances were. Every Marines situation was based off of a case by case basis, but the board members were fairly unanimous at Level 3 or higher as being extremely hard to recover from.

6. What did it take to overcome an incident of domestic violence?

ANSWER - The Marine must have successfully completed the training through professional treatment, shown corrective behavior and to have the record book show that this was a onetime offense. A personal letter explaining what the Marine has done to avoid such incidents in the future also seemed to help. Some cases reviewed; however, were too severe to recover from. The lower the level of domestic violence the easier it was to try to recover. To be able to overcome an incident of domestic violence, the MRO's record had to show extreme accomplishments to support he/she overcame the adversity. Additionally, it was case-dependent. If the MOS as a whole contained multiple Marines with adverse material, the individual had a better opportunity of being recommended for selection.

7. Would a letter of clarification from the Marine or spouse be beneficial in domestic violence cases?

ANSWER - A letter from the Marine in the case of domestic violence did not typically carry a lot of weight, especially if it was level 3 or higher. Level 2 was weighted to the length of time since the incident. This board did not have any letters from a spouse concerning domestic violence. It's important to keep in mind that the facts from the investigation with the substantiating level can't be changed because the spouse forgives the Marine. Depending on the level of the domestic violence, a short letter explaining the severity of the incident, what caused the incident, and the current status of the family was sometimes useful.

8. How did the board consider photographs not received?

ANSWER - MARADMIN 133/11 (the FY11 GySgt selection board 60 day message) states that "All eligible Marines are required to submit an official photograph taken within 12 months of the convening date of the board". A photograph not received said to the board that you are not totally interested in getting selected and that you did not take the initiative to ensure the photo was submitted. It also showed that you are possibly misleading the board members. A picture in a Marines record that was a week or so outdated (beyond 12 months) was not so bad, but older photos and no photo at all would definitely be looked at adversely. Most Marines with outdated photos typically received low ratings. SSgt's should be operating at a GySgt level, thus having updated pictures. It is more important to submit a photo in Service Charlie's than it is to submit a Combat photo in theater. Amputees and wheelchair bound WWR Marines took the time, so there is really no reason NOT

to have a current photo, which also shows apathy and a lack of future growth potential. With today's technology nothing is stopping a Marine from submitting a current photo.

9. What was considered a questionable photo?

ANSWER - The photo must be in accordance with the promotion message, i.e. name, date, height/weight/body fat %, etc. Most Marines that looked out of standards are usually at max body fat %. The members of the board will look at personal appearance i.e. heavy or sloppy etc. Questionable photos included those without any dates listed, the height fluctuated in order to maintain proper height/weight standards when the Marine gained weight, improperly formatted, distorted or illegible and those which contained an MRO that looked sloppy in appearance (portraying that they put no time and effort into the picture). Additionally, MRO's who appeared fat or overweight while the photo contained certification that he/she was within standards was also questionable. Several board members recommended that female Marines who are pregnant should update their photo for submission. Having an outdated photo (or no photo) was much more of a discriminator than a photograph of a pregnant Marine.

10. What was the board looking for when screening photographs?

ANSWER - When screening photographs, the board was looking at the overall appearance of the Marine and the level of effort that went into making a good first impression. Does the Marine look confident in uniform and does the Marine look squared away or not with a properly tailored uniform. Was the photo current, are the ribbons in proper order, and was the Marine wearing all authorized ribbons with devices correctly? Did the individual know what precedence their ribbons should be in and if they were upside down or backwards? Was the uniform clean and sharp and was the height/weight in standards? Board members also checked the Ht/Wt/BF history on past fitness reports to see if there had been any consistency or inconsistencies that jumped out, which is pretty easy to notice.

11. For Marines who were previously assigned on weight control/BCP, what demonstrated recovery?

ANSWER - The first question would be, "Did the Marine complete the assignment successfully?" If the Marine got back within standards and was removed from the BCP program, consistently got 1st class PFT's, and was hitting it out of the ball park; a Marine could recover. Having the recovery recorded on following fitness reports, consistent good PFT scores, and an updated photo (within a month or so from the board) showing that they looked good in uniform, helped to make the Marine competitive, and to get over the adversity.

One case that was mentioned by a board member was, "The MRO (who was on BCP) immediately followed the adversity by going to the drill field where he did a superb job and excelled (while clearly getting back into the standards and maintaining his weight)".

12. For Marines who previously failed a PFT, what demonstrated recovery?

ANSWER - Failing a PFT is inexcusable for a Marine. 1st, 2nd and 3rd class should be easily attainable from Marines. No Marine should ever fail a PFT without some type of medical reasoning. After failing a PFT, the Marine generally needed to show recovery by having several fitness reports recording their clear recovery (1st class to high 1st class preferably). If there were multiple prior PFT failures throughout the Marines career and he/she was hovering on a current 2nd or 3rd class PFT, the Marine was not competitive. Having current passing scores was important, but also having what events that were failed and passed on the directed comments of the RS's Section I comments were important. Marines trying to recover from a failed PFT in their career needed a sustained record of not only passing, but improving their PFT/CFT scores, and show a good appearance in an

updated photo. A Marine should never use the excuse that they let themselves go while on recruiting duty. They should be able to at least pass a 3rd class PFT. If they failed a PFT in grade, it was very difficult to recover. If they were continually 1st class before and after they may recover, if not they stood a poor chance.

13. How were Marines with a large number of tattoos viewed?

ANSWER - As long as the tattoos were documented, they were not regarded unfavorably, and the Marine was briefed the same as all of the other Marines. As with the last FY10 GySgt selection board, tattoos were not an issue on this board.

14. Was the MOS Roadmaps used in any way?

ANSWER - Several board members stated that they did use the MOS Roadmaps. The majority of the time the MOS that was being briefed was quickly explained to the other board members by someone who understood the progression process for the MOS. This helped when the member of the board was highly informed on the Road Maps for that specific community and could provide these details to the other board members when prepping and briefing individual MOS's. The board did; however, look at the total Marine, vice focusing strictly on the Road Map's data. It helped the Marine if he/she had been to his/her appropriate SNCO MOS advanced school as well as the SNCOA Career course. If they did an SDA that prevented them from attending the Career course, but they attended their advanced MOS school, then they were good to go as going above and beyond.

15. Were there a lot of Marines with missing fitness reports/date gaps?

ANSWER - Most board members stated that they estimated the overall percentage of those Marines with missing reports or date gaps to be within 5-10%. There were several Marines with a 31 day date gap and a couple that had gaps longer than 60 days. Fitness report date gaps longer than 60 days were looked at as unfavorable. The overall board viewed date gaps as "Non-starters" as it shows a lack of interest in being the most qualified.

16. How did the board view a Marine that had missing fitness reports/date gaps?

ANSWER - The bottom line; across the board with all board members, was that it was not favorable for the Marine and it typically was looked at adversely (dependant on the duration of the gap). It is the Marines responsibility and it is UNSAT, since this is a GySgt board. It is looked at negatively due to the fact that a piece of the Marines career was missing - positive or negative. A date gap 2 months or bigger was a deal breaker and was a huge discriminator. It opened the door to questioning whether there was adverse material throughout the date-gap period. It also showed lack of due diligence on the part of the Marine to get the records together.

Though it is the Reporting Officials responsibility to submit the fitness report in a timely manner, the bottom line is that it is the Marines record that is getting reviewed to see if he/she has the potential to perform at the next higher grade (as a GySgt), at it is the Marines responsibility. If the Marine has been proactive and taken due diligence to correct the issue, with no action taken by the Reporting Officials, it would be ideal for the Marine to submit a letter to the board and explain the situation so that the circumstances surrounding the gap are explained by the Marine to the board members.

17. How did the board view lack of observed time?

ANSWER - A good majority of the board members stated that Non-observed reports did not hurt nor did it help the Marines situation, depending on the rest of the Marines record.

Lack of observed time was not looked at as adverse, for the most part. A Marine lacking observed time was sometimes a discriminator unless there was a letter from the member explaining why there was so little time under observation. It typically had no impact if the Marine had a history of strong work performance, in the past. The board members could normally review all of the reports and understand why; with TAD, schools, excessive leave, etc. If the last report had great remarks from the RS/RO, then the Marine would typically be okay. However, if the Marine had moderate remarks from the RS/RO, had very few fitness reports, it would help the Marine to have more reports in grade providing better remarks. If there was little observed time in-grade but the Marine grew where planted previously, it was also not viewed as being much of a discriminator at all. It was understood that control over OIC changes, billet changes and other circumstances requiring a fitness report are almost never in the control of the individual Marine.

Lack of observed time effected Marines that were trying to recover from adversity, or did not have many observed reports. It makes it difficult to get a true gauge on the Marines performance if they have multiple non-observed reports while performing their primary duties. The board members were more upset with the RS/RO for not writing observed reports when they have observed the Marine for 6 months or more (previously) but non-observe a report in the system of 3 months right after. The board typically did not consider that a fault of the Marine's, but looked at the entire record.

18. How much emphasis was placed on billet description & accomplishments on page 1 of fitness report?

ANSWER - Just as on last year's FY10 GySgt selection board. Not a lot of emphasis was placed on these two sections by most board members, compared to the Section I & K comments. Billet descriptions were important (supported whether the MRO was performing in a position within his/her MOS or was reassigned) as were accomplishments during the reporting period. On occasion board members would look at the billet accomplishments to clarify questions that they had, especially when looking for specific details concerning the accomplishments within a specialized billet. A Marine fulfilling the duties and responsibilities of a higher grade were looked at slightly better, but it came down to blooming where planted.

19. How much weight was placed on the Section I & K comments from the RS and RO?

ANSWER - There was A LOT of weight placed on both the RS and RO's comments. Those comments from reporting officials who observed a Marine in-grade had substantial weight. This helped to show what the Marine's performance has been for that period of time. The commentary from the RS/RO paints a word picture of who was being briefed. Also, how a RS and RO word their comments will make or break a Marine. The comments are weighed heavily especially when the markings agreed with the comments. Sometimes they did not match the profile, so the tie would usually go to the comments. Most comments started to sound the same but their promotion recommendations (with peers, enthusiastically & highly) helped paint the picture (See next question concerning Promotion Recommendations). Also, identifying any additional information, i.e. Honor grad & top level schools spell it out to the reader who may not understand the MOS. The board members looked for Leadership billets equal to or above the Marines pay grade. Above and beyond promotion recommendation, recommendations for Warrant Officer, or other Officer programs went a long way to the Marines benefit. The RO comments had more weight than the RS, especially with the rank of SSgt. This is because, a majority of the RS's were young officers just learning how to write fitness reports and had little to no profiles. The majority of the RO's had an established profile and had a better understanding of what needed to be said about performance and future potential.

20. How important was a promotion recommendation from the Reporting Senior and the Reviewing Officer within their comments?

ANSWER - Promotion recommendations from both the RS and RO were extremely important. This is one way that the board member can help rank a specific Marine in comparison with his/her peers. The promotion recommendation from the RO helps paint the picture of the Marine. It is very easy for the RS to put "Promote with peers" or "Promote with enthusiasm" without offending the Marine. Promotion recommendations from the RS was very important if it was highly recommended or with enthusiasm. If it was just the cut and paste "Promote with peers" then it did not carry any weight. Depending on whom the RS was and their rank had an effect on how much weight was given to the RS comments. If the RS was a 2nd LT or a WO, it had a little less of an impact than a RS with more time in service. The RO makes or breaks a Marine with what they say.

The promotion recommendation from the RO was important, especially if it reinforced the RS recommendation or amplified his/her recommendation, and unless the remarks conflicted with the RO markings. The RO's promotion recommendation generally held slightly more weight than the RS's recommendation. Comments such as "Promote", "Recommended for Promotion", "Highly recommended for promotion", "Enthusiastically recommended", "Must Promote", "Promote now" or RS's and RO's that provided no recommendation at all were all viewed as the RS and RO communicating to the board the promotability of the Marine. Although, it did not help if the RO started Section K with "Concur with the RS", the RS recommended with enthusiasm and then the RO states "Promote with peers". If there was no promotion recommendation, or a weak recommendation was given, it could have a great effect on the Marine. This was important because if a recommendation was not present by both the RS and the RO, one must assume the Marine was not recommended.

21. How were one to two line comments from the RS/RO viewed?

ANSWER - It really came down to what was said in the one or two lines. If the comments were to the point and painted a solid picture of the Marine then it wasn't necessarily a bad thing. Several board members mentioned that they saw entire paragraphs that were all fluff and said nothing. Others had one to two lines and said it all, so it does depend on the content. Comments relative to the markings made them fine; however, a lot of white space in section I and K with short comments is usually a disservice to the MRO. It also depended on how long the report covered. If the comments were mediocre, then it didn't typically bode well for that Marine, especially if the grades and comparative assessment were also low. Some board members stated that they viewed it as something was not being said or that something was out there that may not explain the entire picture. In some cases it would have been better to give a non-observed report instead. Opposite of that is when an RS or RO took the time to write two or three lines about the Marine, which was good for the board to see. It is usually seen as a poor reflection on the RS/RO and is seen as laziness, dependent on the ranking of the report and the overall assessment of the record.

22. How much weight was placed on Relative Value (RV) (80 to 100 scale) of fitness reports in assessing overall competitiveness?

ANSWER - Most members put a lot of weight on Relative Values. It was viewed as "The big picture" for the Marine and is normally a good indicator of how they were performing. Relative Value was the "truth teller" but the board did take the time to go through each record to make sure that a Marine did get a fair shake by the RS and RO. "If we noticed that a Marine did not get a fair shake because the RS and RO were not tracking their profiles then that was briefed in detail". Also, considering that the RS typically was very familiar with the MRO; a lot of weight was placed on Relative Value because it told the members how the individual compares to his/her peers. Relative Values; this was the overarching factor in determining future potential for some members, but the Relative Value and RAW scores; were never considered alone to make a determination, as the entire package is reviewed to show the overall picture of the Marine. When Marines had similar

records though, Relative Value assessments were usually the tie breaker for some members, as well. Relative Values covering the Marines entire record, but more importantly in-grade, were looked at in evaluating the overall competitiveness of the Marine.

23. How important was where the Marine was marked on the Reviewing Officer's Comparative Assessment 'Christmas Tree' on page 5?

ANSWER - Where the Marine was marked on the Comparative Assessment was weighted more heavily when the Marine clearly broke out from his/her peers (either "eminently qualified" or "a qualified Marine") indicating superior performance or average/below average performance trends. Consistently maintaining a good performance rating by an RO or increasing (or decreasing) ratings each reporting period was a good indicator and was briefed out during the 3 minute briefs. This information gave the board members a better assessment of what type of Marine he/she was. Consideration was given to where the Marine was placed on the RO's assessment, in comparison with peers. The higher the better, the lower sometimes was a good indicator of how the Marines performance typically falls out, as this is one more tool to paint a positive or negative picture.

24. What did the board define as MOS credibility?

ANSWER - MOS credibility was defined as the Marine spending a considerable amount of time performing in primary MOS billets (typically at least a full length tour of duty), and having the most current and advanced schools/training that is related to it. It was case dependent since many MOS's varied in TIG/TIS to be considered eligible for promotion. Some MOS's had Marines who (for the most part) only had one or two observed reports and they were already in zone for promotion. Also, if the Marine was lacking in MOS credibility but consistently showed high performance in positions outside of his/her MOS, the MOS credibility was not weighted as much. Different factors come into play, such as: how long the Marine has worked in their job, have they developed in that job and have they been an instructor at their MOS school for junior Marines? These were just a few considerations that had to be considered when assessing overall MOS credibility. If the Marine is on a B-billet, it is understood that he/she will have a gap in MOS credibility. "MOS credibility is working within your MOS; however, we realize Marines grow where planted and that is what's important". Having several observed reports in-grade, working or performing MOS duties proficiently in combat or garrison, meeting or exceeding challenges in the MOS at or above the Marines pay grade, and being assigned in leadership billets are all also very important items to consider when assessing a Marines MOS credibility.

25. How was MOS credibility viewed in terms of competitiveness?

ANSWER - MOS credibility is always an area that is heavily weighted throughout a Marines record, since the Marine is being evaluated to see what his/her potential is to perform at the next higher grade. MOS credibility played a big role in some of the bigger MOS populations (infantry, artillery, MT, etc.). "We wanted to see both in and outside of the primary MOS. That gives you a better assessment of what type of Marine you are dealing with". A strong record went a long way in determining how much of an issue that MOS credibility was considered, since it wasn't considered alone as the determining factor of a Marines selection/non-selection. Having no MOS credibility at all was negative. "Most Marines have some type and you need to take into consideration if the Marine bloomed where he/she was planted". In accordance with the precept guidance, the board considered Marines serving on Special Duty Assignments as highly competitive. The phrase "bloom where you are planted", also was used often during the board. It was good to have MOS credibility, but in some cases it was not favorable for the Marine if they did not perform MOS duties for extended periods of time. In some cases, Marines who were clearly superior in MOS credibility overcame the lack of having an additional duty or personal

awards. A good balance of special duty and primary duty achieved by the Marine was also considered in enhancing a Marine's competitiveness.

26. How was a combat fitness report viewed in terms of competitiveness?

ANSWER - Combat fitness reports were viewed in a varying degree depending on the MOS. For those MOS's where multiple deployments were commonplace, a lack of a deployment, or even having just one was a discriminator. In other MOS's where deployments were uncommon, having one or more was viewed as very favorable, and was used as a tool by the voting member (preparing the case) to sell the Marine as highly qualified. Since the board understood that some MOS's don't always deploy, the combat report actually played an important role if the Marine was RFC in his duty in-grade in combat, as a promotion killer. Also, if the Marine was given a personal award for combat actions, this was looked at as being more competitive. The members looked at how the Marine performed in combat and that was equally important. Doing well in combat was great, but adversity in combat is not recommended. "A strong and steady staple of today's war fighter; (combat) played a huge role in 'breaking out' a Marine". Combat was viewed favorably if the Marines performance was good, but being relieved of duties in combat = MOS incompetence. "Combat reports gave the Marine an advantage also, especially if working outside of their primary duties and doing well. This could also hurt the Marine if they had negative marks on these reports or they were relieved in combat".

27. How much weight was attached to 'Operation or Deployed' time, not in combat but on a MEU, etc.?

ANSWER - Heavy!! If a Marine has not deployed or been to organizations where they could deploy looked like they were hiding. If they had only one deployment and several base or station assignments, it also looked like they were hiding. Though, operational deployments aboard a MEU did not hold as much weight as being deployed ISO OIF or OEF, if a Marine had not been to combat, but had several MEU deployments, or had been to a HQ, then that was briefed to make the case that the Marine was out there doing what was expected, and was not the fault of the Marine that he/she had not been to combat. It ultimately mattered that they deployed and Marines that had deployed multiple times were a little more competitive than those that had not. A lot of board members agreed that "if you have not been to the fight by now, you were behind your peers to start with, unless your multiple PCS's to the Western Pacific were clearly defined".

EDUCATION

28. How much weight did the board attach to Non-Resident PME that was above minimum requirements?

ANSWER - Doing the non-resident PME was huge and showed initiative that they wanted to get promoted. It was huge for the above zone Marines to get promoted. It shows that they have not given up since being passed over. Non-Resident PME was briefed and was sometimes a discriminator when it came to deciding who would get those last few quotas. It showed the board that the Marine was better than just doing the minimum requirement. Additional Non-Resident PME was good if there was a tie between two records; however, do not substitute the resident course for a higher level non-resident course. One board member stated it best, in saying: "Clear weight was placed on Non-Resident PME that was above and beyond the minimum requirement. If the MRO completed the SNCO Advanced Distance Education program & the Senior Enlisted Joint PME, combined with the SNCOA Career course, the package was briefed as such and viewed as favorable. In some cases, having these three PME's overcame the lack of a B billet, combat or personal awards in grade. Extreme weight was placed on possessing the minimum required PME. In several cases, Marines who

failed to complete the SNCO Career Non-Resident DEP (8100 series MCI) were found not qualified for promotion. Because of this, some stellar performers (to include those with a Bronze Star with distinguishing device) were found by the board members to be not qualified for promotion because they did not complete the 8100 series MCI".

29. How much weight was given to Marines that completed off duty education, such as college and trade schools?

ANSWER - Some value was given to Marines with off duty education, if they were PME complete. Also, if the schooling related to the MOS, extra value may have been awarded. Some board members put some focus on it but others did not. Having off duty education did show that the Marine was not satisfied with the bare minimum and was seeking self improvement. It was looked at positively, but if a Marine had a Masters degree, had only completed the basic PME, then it didn't matter. Off duty education was briefed and was a discriminator when it came to the last couple of quotas. If a Marine had off duty education, ~~but~~ had not completed the SNCO Advanced DEP, or SEJPME then that raised some questions.

30. How much weight was placed on advanced MOS schools in the Marines PMOS?

ANSWER - Advanced MOS schools were a big deal for a Marine to be competitive, especially if he/she had been to the SNCOA resident career course as well. When in doubt, if it comes down to one or the other, Marines should attend the advanced MOS school over the resident career course (since Marines compete for allocations with Marines from their MOS and the Advanced MOS school gives a Marine more MOS credibility and proficiency within his/her community). However, having completed both of them showed initiative on the Marines part to set them up for future success. Having completed the Advanced MOS School showed that the Marine was keeping up with the changes within the MOS and is vital for career progression. The board members understand that combat and SDA tours sometimes keep a Marine from attending their Advanced MOS school, but in several cases it made a difference when it came down to tie breakers.

31. How did the board view Marines who have not been to the rifle and pistol range for a number of years?

ANSWER - Lack of updated rifle and pistol ranges raised questions if they had not just come off of an SDA or back to back combat tours. This was not weighted very heavily, (on this board) but was brought up, and not a good thing in the long run if it was a long time overdue. Marines that had out dated rifle and pistol range qualifications that were not explained in the report - i.e. exempt, PET shooter or SDA; were determined to be a slight discriminator. RS and RO's must clearly state in the fitness report what the circumstances are so that it is clear to the board members, who don't know this Marine, from the next. It did depend on each Marine's situation though. However, careful observation was given to the Marines present and past duty stations; as range availability and assigned quotas by location can play a major role in whether the Marine even received the opportunity to train.

32. In more technical MOS's with high op tempos, such as the Air wing, did Marines not having average MCMAP belt or updated Rifle/Pistol qualifications hurt the Marine in regards to competitiveness?

ANSWER - The board members were pretty consistent across the board in saying that Marines should be afforded the opportunity to be able to complete their required training. If the command can afford to let them complete it, it is the Marines responsibility to ensure that he/she is going above and beyond to do so. There really is no excuse if a Marine has not re-qualified on the rifle range since 2003, and he/she has been to duty stations where

the training is typically afforded to the Marines. This is usually one area where a board member can see an effort, or lack thereof, by the Marine to set their record up for success. If a Marine is exempt from the Rifle/Pistol range, or in a position where MCMCAP training is not allowed, or afforded to the Marines, ensure that a Directed comment is placed in the Section I comments from the RS stating the exemptions and the circumstances surrounding the training not being updated.

33. How were PFT/CFT scores and classes briefed?

ANSWER - PFT's and CFT's were briefed as class with number value. If it was a high 1st class, it was usually brought out, and 300's were given extra attention. Typically, they were briefed as: "PFT current/not current (date), 250, first class (or 290 high, first class)".

34. How important was a first class PFT/CFT?

ANSWER - SSgt's should have a 1st class PFT. The importance of a 1st class PFT was largely dependent on the MOS. In some cases, the majority of Marines had no higher than a 2nd class PFT. In most MOS's however, having a 2nd or 3rd class PFT was viewed as undesirable and a discriminator as a GySgt of Marines who cannot effectively lead his Marines in PT if he or she is unable to lead from the front. Physical fitness is the one area over which Marines have total control. A 2nd class is indicative of a lack of initiative and foresight. 1st class PFT's also played a vital role when the competition was extremely tight. 1st class PFT/CFT's were given extra value especially if they were consistent over the Marines career. If a Marine did not have any CFT score in the system, it was not completely held against the Marine if it was due to combat, but it could also be negative because the board did not have any past score to range from. Having a current PFT/CFT score even if it was combat exempt was a good thing.

35. Did the RS explanation have any weight when a Marine had "RDNT PFT" reports?

ANSWER - If a Marine did not take the PFT but the RS gave a reasonable explanation of why in the fitness report, then the board took that into consideration. Yes, it helped when the RS took the time to explain, but the bottom line is: "Don't let the board wonder what happened". It did tend to take the assumption out of the equation when an RS gave an explanation. Some other board members stated that, "If the Marine had a RDNT PFT/CFT then the RS explanation most likely wouldn't have mattered; it would still be a negative reflection because the Marine has six months to complete it". So, it is best to ensure that the RS explains the details of the RDNT PFT/CFT for clarification of the details, but also that the Marine takes the PFT/CFT to begin with if it is within his/her power to do so.

36. How much weight was placed on the Marine Corps Martial Arts program?

ANSWER - The Marine Corps Martial Arts belts did have a good amount of weight. If Marines did not have the required belt level per the Marine Corps Order it was a negative reflection. Not advancing beyond the basic requirements were not favorable, especially if the Marines peers were well ahead of the power curve. Web belts and tan belts did seem to be "show stoppers" in most cases, and detracted from the records very much. Marines needed at least gray belts to be competitive with their peers. Black belts and instructor tabs were big boosters.

DUTY ASSIGNMENTS

37. How were Special Duty Assignments and combat tours viewed in terms of competitiveness?

ANSWER - A Marine on an SDA is typically outside of his/her PMOS and usually combat is within the PMOS, so if they have an SDA then that goes a long way. Both were looked at as making a Marine more competitive than those that didn't. SDA's were part of the precept so it did carry a little more weight than combat. If a Marine had an SDA and combat, then that Marine was a step ahead of his/her peers that didn't. In cases where Marines excelled in both, those Marines typically received a higher recommendation number. With that being said, an SDA without combat carried more weight than just combat alone.

Marines in MOS's that were constantly deploying but did not have deployed time, made them less competitive. Consideration was given in the fact that the Marine may not always have control on where they are assigned, such as instructor billets, or a non deployable unit, but should show attempts to get to a deploying unit or IA billet. And, not the year they are likely to be in zone for promotion.

38. What was the weight attached to the successful completion of a Special Duty Assignment?

ANSWER - It was heavily weighted compared to someone with no SDA or a non-successful completion of one. Completing a SDA tour was a precept requirement, and the board was able to see the difficulty of the tour, and if the Marine completed the tour with or without adverse material. If the Marine successfully completed an SDA, then that Marine was highly competitive. Especially if they completed an SDA, then went right back to their PMOS, deployed to combat, and did well. If the MOS allowed a Marine to attend a SDA in the first place, then a successful completion of one gave the Marine a huge advantage. A successful SDA generally raised the MRO and entire recommendation number level (from a 3 to a 4 or from a 4 to a 5).

Marines do need to realize that timing is important when leaving the PMOS and spending 3 years (typically) on an SDA. Performance reflected in the PMOS, prior to and after, is sometimes dependant on how competitive the completion of the SDA tour would help your record to be, i.e. having all below average reports in your PMOS (in the IMOS you are briefed in) making you already behind your peers while you are away from your community.

39. How did the board view Marines with very little or no observed time in their PMOS as a SSgt due to being on a Special Duty Assignment or B-Billet?

ANSWER - For the most part, the board did not view a Marine with less PMOS observed time as a discriminator if he/she was currently on an SDA. It depended on the Marine, but it did hurt the Marine, in some cases. The Marine had to have done better in the SDA to prove his/her worth. Being on the SDA in this case typically made the Marine competitive as long as the Marine "Bloomed where planted", got back into the fight, and if the SDA was completed. Not having PMOS time, and on an SDA was viewed negatively by some board members, especially if the Marine was on a second tour. In this case, the board members would have to ask the question: "Why the Marine is trying to stay out of the PMOS"?

40. How did the board look at Marines who were "Relieved for Cause" (RFC) from a Special Duty Assignment ever in their career?

ANSWER - Marines who were RFC at any point in their career were more often than not, down-graded in recommendation number by most board members. In all cases where RFC existed, it was evident that there was adverse material (DUI/DWI, Reckless driving, Adultery, Inappropriate behavior, etc.) However, it is important to note that adverse reports during these periods (to include Page 11's, 6105's and even NJP's) were

recoverable as long as the end state was a successful tour. There were several Marines who received adverse reports, Page 11's, etc. during their tour for "substandard performance", "Not meeting mission", or "assault on a recruit" that were still highly recommended for promotion after showing continued or improved performance, as well as a successful completion, subsequent to the adverse material.

In the long run, it was adverse material that was taken into perspective with the rest of their package. The severity of the reason they were relieved is what carried more weight. Several board members commented that it: "Is not good! If you are screened and complete the school, you have to hang in there". Early RFC's in the Marines career could be overcome depending what the RFC was for and how competitive the Marines peers were. The bottom line is that, if a Marine was RFC on an SDA in grade, then they were not competitive (dependent on how much time has elapsed since the RFC). If they were RFC as a Sgt then it was not an impact on their ability to get promoted because they were promoted to SSgt.

41. How did the board view a Marine who was relieved for "Good of the Service" (RFGOS) from a SDA?

ANSWER - If a Marine was RFGOS on an SDA then the board took into consideration why. The majority of the time it did not hurt the Marine as long as that Marine continued to perform after the RFGOS. "The interesting thing is that most that were RFGOS did not perform very well when they departed the SDA". A couple of the board members mentioned that they attempted to ignore the issue, but when it ultimately affected job performance, they couldn't. A RFGOS had a different effect on the members of the board. "This is a good time for the Marines to submit a letter explaining the reason for the RFGOS (i.e. medical, family, etc.)". One board member mentioned that it was not looked at as severely as a RFC, since most RFGOS were for personal reasons, not professional reasons. Most RFGOS were not negative, but if the Marines peers completed an SDA, then the Marine would then be less competitive because of the relief.

AWARDS/RECOGNITION

42. How were awards briefed?

ANSWER - All awards were briefed with special emphasis placed on those received in grade and in combat. Awards were briefed as type, rank received, year received, billet the Marine was holding, combat if the award had a "V" device, or if it was a Bronze Star, Silver star, or Navy Cross; some of the citation was briefed. They were briefed briefly and quickly. They were almost briefed as statistics. If a Marine had a combat distinguishing device on the award, that was briefed specifically. Awards were broken down to end of tour, impact, combat, and briefed by grade. Combat awards are always viewed closely in that how a Marine responds in adverse situations says a lot about his or her character and leadership. Combat awards were viewed as superior performance if it was an Impact award and the citation was viewed for the specifics.

Graduating with Honors, Distinguished graduate, Gung ho, or being placed on the Directors honor roll from SNCO Academies, and MOS schools were specifically briefed in each 3 minute MRO brief (when present in the OMPF). All awards from fitness reports reflecting commendatory material were briefed as well. One board member gave this example: "He/she has 5 personal awards: 1) Navy Commendation Medal (in grade) that was an End of Tour award in SYSCOM. 4) Navy Achievement Medals, 2 in grade. The two in grade were Impact awards and one was a Combat "V" for heroic actions in OIF (read excerpt from citation)".

WOUNDED WARRIORS

43. For Marines (Staff/Patients) assigned to the Wounded Warrior Battalions, in regards to promotion competitiveness, was there any cases noticed where it made them less competitive?

ANSWER - The staff at the Wounded Warrior Battalions are looked at just like every other Marine, in that, "blooming where you are planted", and ensuring that you are performing at whatever billet you are placed, is the number one factor in that billet positively or negatively affecting a Marines career for future promotion.

For the patients, most of the Marines viewed had Date Gaps and missing information. This left a lot of the details surrounding their circumstances missing and a general lack of information to make a solid recommendation on the Marines case. In circumstances such as these, the reporting officials need to ensure that there are reports covering the Marines for the time that they are a patient and that they put the value of what the Marines status is in the comments of the report. The Marine submitting a letter to the board with an explanation of the circumstances surrounding the injuries/illness and the details of the future recovery would also benefit the Marine to fill in the gaps to alleviate any blank spots in the record.

**Semper Fidelis,
Enlisted Career Counseling & Evaluation Unit**